

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS** This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Previously Presented) A process for producing iron ore agglomerates comprising agglomerating fine iron ore particles in the presence of a binder system that comprises a binder and an alkali metal silicate, wherein the alkali metal silicate is present in an amount of between 0.0001 to 0.07 percent by weight, based on the total weight of dry iron ore agglomerate, and wherein the binder system is free of synthetic polymer.
2. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the binder is carboxymethyl cellulose.
3. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the amount of alkali metal silicate is between 0.04 and 0.07 percent by weight, based on the total weight of dry iron ore agglomerate.
4. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the alkali metal silicate is sodium silicate.
5. (Currently Amended) A binder system ~~suited~~ for producing iron ore agglomerates comprising carboxymethyl cellulose and an alkali metal silicate.
6. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 2 wherein the amount of alkali metal silicate is between 0.04 and 0.07 percent by weight, based on the total weight of dry iron ore agglomerate.
7. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 6 wherein the alkali metal silicate is sodium silicate.
8. (Previously Presented) The binder system of claim 5 wherein said alkali metal silicate is sodium silicate.

9. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 1 wherein the binder is selected from the group consisting of inorganic binders, water-soluble natural polymers, modified natural polymers and mixtures thereof.